

CITYBEATS

TEMPERS rose; invectives poured in torrents. Tears flowed without let, as the lifeless body of the "good man" was being lowered into his final six-foot-long abode. His bereaved family's hordes of sympathisers were not left out of the emotional infection. It was last Friday at the Victoria Court Cemetery, Lekki, Lagos State.

It was the last farewell to the late Johnson Kayode Olanrewaju, an ex-naval officer, who was callously cut down ten days after his 54th birthday - on January 17 - by some yet unknown gunmen.

After 13 years with the Nigerian Navy, he had worked with Exxonmobil Producing Limited for a decade as Marine Security Coordinator. He was on his way back home from Cardinal Securities, Lagos, where he last worked when agents of death seized him. Three gunmen intercepted his blue Toyota Avensis Wagon, just a stone's throw to his 27, Adeyemi Street, Alakuko, Ogun State home.

His wife, Modupe and their son, Tunde watched helplessly as he was bundled into the trunk of his car. The gunmen drove him off after dispossessing the trio of their valuables.

After a frantic search, the late Olanrewaju's children got the shocking news of his death the next day. It was at the Sango Police Station, where his car also parked. There, the family was told that the late Olanrewaju had been killed along Ota Road. Then, his body was already lying in the morgue at the Ifo General Hospital, where it was deposited by the police.

One of his daughters, Oluwakemi who works with Intels Nigeria Ltd, Warri, Delta State, recalled how it all happened: "Our father was on his way from work that fateful night. He had gone to take our mother back home from her shop at about 9.45 pm. Eye witnesses told us that at Oluwatobi Junction along FPF Campbell Road near our house, he was intercepted by three gunmen who took all they had on them before driving our father away in the trunk of his car. Immediately, our mother rushed to Alakuko Police Station to report the case.

"The next day, our mother went with us to Sango Police Station following directives from Alakuko Police Station. There, we saw our father's car. It was parked intact. It was there we were told that our father was shot dead by armed robbers the previous night."

The police swore to get his killers, but it ended there. And the family accepted their fate and moved to bury their dead. The arrangement began with a service of songs at a wake-keep held at the family's Alakuko residence last Thursday.

Before the interment at Lekki, a soul-stirring service was held in his honour by officials of Christ Apostolic Church (Power of God Centre), led by Pastor Tola Otujinrin. The roomy church and indeed, its premises, were jam-packed with sympathisers who, amid sobs, recounted the late Olanrewaju's sterling virtues.

At the service were the deceased's wife, Modupe; their children, Oluwakemi, Olalekan, Bukola, Dipo; his sister, Mrs Abosede Akinseye; his cousin, Mr. Akande Ilesanmi; Lekan Arasanyin (cousin); Niyi and Femi Olanrewaju (brothers); his friends, Soji Aremo and Raphael Ogedengbe, and Bobola Adeniyi of Intels Limited, among others. His kinsmen from Okeagbe, his Ondo State home town, were also there.

Pastor Otujinrin urged all to imbibe Christ-like virtues which, he noted, were exemplified by the late Olanrewaju's life.

"With people's comments and, in fact, looking at the crowd here today, there is no gain saying the fact that the late Olanrewaju lived a worthy life that must be emulated by all. He lived for God by living for his people. It is not about how long you live; it is about how well you live your life, especially in line with God's commandments," the cleric noted.

It was a flood of tears when the late Olanrewaju's body was being lowered into the grave. His wife and children

Painful bye to slain ex-naval officer

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•The late Olanrewaju's widow performing the dust-to-dust with the support of her children



•The late Olanrewaju

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were inconsolable; so were their relations. Ilesanmi cried like a baby.

As their relations and sympathisers fought tears, they held the widow and her children by their arms when it was time to perform the dust-to-dust rite.

Heartfelt curses rained on the killers of the "caring man." "Sir Kay (as he was fondly addressed), those who did this to you have offended God. They must pay for it," Mrs Akinseye bemoaned.

To Ilesanmi, Olanrewaju's killers had hurt many families. "His murder is not only a blow to his immediate family; his



•The officiating ministers after the service

killers have tampered with the fountain of joy of many who were lucky to come across Sir Kay," Ilesanmi said, adding: "He was everything to me. In fact, at every point of my life, he was there for me on all fronts. He was caring to a fault. Indeed, he epitomised the real essence of religion. He was a rare blessing to mankind."

In her tribute, Olanrewaju's widow said: "You have truly been a friend and brother since the day we got married. We both promised to stay together and watch our children grow to become great, but the unexpected happened. Right in my presence, you were taken away and while I was expecting you back, we received the

sad news of your death the next day. Who will be there now to encourage and advise our children? I will miss your presence around me."

His brothers - Niyi and Femi - agreed that the late Olanrewaju was the "binding cord that held the family together," adding that he would leave no stone unturned to positively touch the life of whoever came across him.

Femi recalled: "One of his friends who was once seriously ill and deserted by all, despite Kayode's busy schedule, he stayed with him and gave him financial and emotional supports until the man eventually passed away. He was a perfect gentleman and exemplar of Godliness."